European spatial planning: past, present and future

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European Spatial Planning: Past, Present and Future[1]

Content

1 Introduction

In the present context of the European Union (EU) it seems decidedly disingenuous to invoke the term spatial planning. The talk of the town, certainly since the Commission has published and stakeholders have widely discussed the 'Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion' (CEC 2008) is of territorial cohesion. As against territorial cohesion, by common agreement spatial planning is said not to be a competence of the EU. However, the spatial planning that the EU wants no part of is the function of a body of government with a legal mandate – what in EU terms is called a competence – to control development, usually with reference to a statutory land-use plan, but in the UK case taking account also of any other material considerations.

The meaning of words is not cast in stone but depends on who is using them when and why. Thus, whereas the EU presently has reasons – to be discussed – not to invoke the term spatial planning, the present author has reasons to do so. After all, planners often entertain a broader view of spatial planning that is compatible with the concept of territorial cohesion. It is the view of spatial planning as the formulation of integrated strategic spatial frameworks to guide public as well as private action. This puts spatial planning more in the context of governance than government where mutual understanding and commitment are as important as statutory powers. Seen in this light, there could be no objection against calling the emergent EU practice, about which more below, European spatial planning rather than, as is the present practice, territorial cohesion policy.

In fact, speaking to the ministers of spatial planning discussing the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) at Madrid in 1995, the then Commissioner for regional policy, Monika Wulf-Mathies, did use the term spatial planning, arguing that this was implied in the EU policy to strengthen economic and social cohesion. She argued that this merely needed to be clarified in the pending reform of the European treaties,

[1] This paper is an earlier version of the following paper published in revised form: Faludi, A. (2010): Centenary paper: European spatial planning: Past, present and future. In: Town Planning Review 81,1, 1-22.

eventually resulting in the Treaty of Amsterdam coming into operation in 1997. It was only after the refusal of member states to recognise that this was so that the Commission switched to invoking the concept of territorial cohesion in the early-2000s.

The point of reminding the reader of this episode is not to prove all those who prefer to talk about territorial cohesion rather than spatial planning wrong. There is no right or wrong in such matters. The use of words depends on context and on intentions. The Commission's intention has been to break out of the impasse concerning a Community competence for spatial planning by shifting the discussion into the arena of cohesion policy. The author's intention is to retain the link with spatial planning and the relevant academic literature. That's all there is to it.

There is much discussion about what territorial cohesion is, also in the consultations on the Green Paper that have ended in February 2009[2]. This is not surprising. Waterhout (2008) (see also Faludi 2006) sees territorial cohesion as an umbrella for the pursuit of balanced development, competitiveness, sustainability and good territorial governance. The first three are concerns shared with other policy areas. Territorial governance is the unique selling point of territorial cohesion policy. The focus is on what in EU jargon is called the coherence of sector policies as they affect territories. Territorial cohesion thus requires such policies to be integrated. Such integration is, of course, the aim also of spatial planning. Wulf-Mathies talked about European spatial planning in precisely this sense, and so did the ESDP (CEC 1999). One may thus say that under the guise of EU territorial cohesion policy European spatial planning is coming of age, but in the process the leopard has changed its spots: It no longer relies on statutory land-use plans. The preferred mode is cooperation in formulating joint strategies or visions of various kinds.

The purpose and mode of European spatial planning/territorial cohesion policy are thus encapsulated in three 'Cs': cohesion, coherence, cooperation. With its emphasis on cooperation rather than authoritative decision-making, territorial cohesion policy belongs to the realm of governance rather than government. Conceived of as statutory land-use planning – a narrow view of what it entails – spatial planning belongs to the realm of government, with as always elements of governance present in the process of making them.

It is useful to dwell somewhat longer on the difference as against land-use planning. Traditionally, the planning vehicle for achieving coherence has been the land-use plan. In the mid-20th century, the Schuster Report in the UK spelled out the assumptions (Committee on the Qualification of Planners 1950: 13):

- that for nearly all its activities the community depends on land and that land in Britain is severely limited in relation to the demand made on it, and
- that the location of development, particularly industrial, can have a profound effect on social, economic and strategic issues.

Schuster continued by saying that, in preparing and implementing the statutory plan, local planning authorities needed to conform to the government's emergent regional policy, as well as pay regard to their own social, economic and strategic policies (Committee on the Qualification of Planners 1950: 15). Other than town planners at the time, Schuster and his committee did not see this as a matter of design, as the setting out of a fixed pattern of physical features. Rather, the "process of arranging a pattern for com-

[2] For the many contributions of the stakeholders see the website of DG Regio: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/consultation/terco/contrib_en.htm.

munities must be continuous and constantly adapted to changing conditions" (Committee on the Qualification of Planners 1950: 20). The essence was to arrive at a synthesis – coherence! However, the vehicle was a statutory land-use plan called the development plan under the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act.

The statutory land-use plan has lost its exclusive role since. This is reflected in the rise to prominence of spatial rather than town and country planning in the UK. The term had its origins in Euro-English, meaning non-British concepts conveyed in English words (Williams 1996: 57). In the process of transferring concepts from one context to the other, misunderstanding is inevitable. Thus, spatial planning comes from the German *Raumplanung* and the Dutch *ruimtelijke planning*, but in both those contexts the term connotes the preparation of statutory plans, so much so that planners now prefer the term spatial development. As against this in the UK, where under the Thatcher and Major governments town and country planning had a restrictive meaning, spatial planning has acquired a progressive connotation. It is thus used symbolically to mark a break from the recent past in terms of what planning has come to suggest: a more integrative and holistic approach. Indeed, referring to the RTPI's 'A New Vision for Planning' (RTPI 2001), Allmendinger and Haughton (2009: 620) signal a "shift from, broadly, regulatory planning to 'spatial planning'. While definitions of what constitutes spatial planning are diverse (...) there is a broad agreement that it involves a focus on the qualities and management of space and place". This is also why 'place-making' is being used as a new term. Indeed, in its reaction to the Green Paper, the UK government claims that what in EU parlance goes under territorial cohesion is place-making.

Adding for good measure the element, mentioned above, of governance to the equation, Allmendinger and Haughton (2009: 620): "With their clear focus on localities, planners arguably have a key role to play in bringing a clearer spatial dimension to the integration of a wide variety of policy sectors". Indeed, many authors (Albrechts 2001; Albrechts/Healey/Kunzmann 2003; Healey 2007; Wiechmann 2008) see spatial visions as the preferred vehicle for spatial planning.

The shift from government to governance indicates the state doing more than engaging in imperative coordination. It stands for developing "mechanisms and strategies of coordination adopted in the face of complex reciprocal interdependence among operationally autonomous actors, organizations, and functional systems" (Jessop 2004: 52). This forms the occasion to reiterate a point made above which is that governance puts into focus the need for cooperation between a multitude of public and private actors. Planning has brought this into practice even before governance has become a term of good currency. In this respect, it was ahead of its time, but where it relies on statutory plans, planning remains stuck in the context of government.

2 Structure of the paper

After this introduction dealing with basic concepts, the paper traces the interplay between the pursuit of cohesion, coherence and cooperation in the European planning arena. The three stages identified in the development of the EU by Keeler (2005) serve as a framework: the launch era when the Treaty of Rome was coming into operation; the doldrums era after the 'empty chair crisis' provoked by French President Charles De Gaulle bringing with it stagnation of integration, and the boom era after the Single European Act until the Maastricht Treaty. Without saying so in so many words, Hooghe and Marks (2008) invoking Keeler's periodisation add a fourth era: the present crisis of politicisation and national boundary reconstruction. This crisis could not fail to impact upon the arena in which spatial planning/territorial cohesion is being discussed, where

six net-contributors have put on the table the renationalization of cohesion policy (Bachtler/Mendez 2007). Jessop (2004: 68) relates the crisis to the shift from the Keynesian welfare state to a Schumpeterian workforce post-national regime focusing on permanent innovation and subordinating social policy to the demands of the labour market. Policy making is shifting in all directions, in addition to which there is the shift to governance. The Europolity is thus an "integral moment in the de-nationalization of the state, the de-statization of politics, and the internationalization of regimes – without being the highest level to which national state powers are shifted upwards, at which new forms of partnership are being organized, or on which the internationalization of policy regimes is occurring". This creates uncertainty and disorientation, with the public and thus governments reacting defensively, availing themselves of opportunities, like referenda on European treaties, to voice their disquiet.

The paper discusses each of the four eras – launch era; the doldrums; the boom era; the crisis – with a focus on the role of European spatial planning/territorial cohesion policy. It shows that spatial or territorial issues have been recognised to be inherent to European integration from the start, leading to the, albeit halting development of an implicit spatial or territorial cohesion policy long before, thanks to its vice president at the time, the president of the French region of Limousin Robert Savy, the Association of European Regions invented the concept of territorial cohesion in 1995. In fact, ever since the early 1960s, the Commission has been seeking to render this policy more explicit and effective. Often though, member states have either ignored its arguments altogether or, where there have been agreements in principle, sought to weaken the policy during implementation. This tug-of-war, sometimes amounting to a guerrilla against the Commission, is but a reflection of the ambiguity of the European construct: A creation of the member states, the EU is nevertheless regarded with suspicion.

As regards this implicit territorial policy (operating among others through area designations for the Structural Funds and through their programming) bringing spatial planners with their specific skills and hang-ups into the process, the ESDP has been a side show, and the competence issue which it raised – yet another instance of the ambiguity of the European construct – a nuisance. Although a side show, the ESDP has not been unimportant, though. It was and is bringing actors together and it has potential for the future, but it is still secondary to the main thing, which is the so far implicit territorial cohesion policy of the EU. However, if and when the institutional issue of the position of territorial cohesion policy in the European construct will be resolved, the specific skills of planners: spatial analysis and spatial positioning, will be useful.

There will be conclusions reflecting also on fundamental issues. For planners, they offer a hopeful perspective: Conceived as the formulation of spatial strategies, spatial planning can become a vehicle, not only for territorial cohesion, but for formulating EU policy generally. And, even if under the territorial cohesion label, interest in spatial planning is bound to increase.

3 The launch era

As indicated, this concerns the Treaty of Rome and its immediate follow-up. There were attempts to make spatial planning part of the embryonic European project. Already before the Second World War, albeit on a modest scale, planning conferences and exchanges had taken place. Planning in the US – metropolitan park systems and of course the Tennessee Valley Authority – and the UK – garden cities and later the green belt – had become sources of inspiration for Northwest European planners, generally the pacemakers in European spatial planning. Their vanguard had been contemplating spa-

tial planning on the national and, in a few instances, even the international scale. Planners in the Third Reich, too, had been thinking big and, as pernicious war aims had seemed to come within reach, had been swarming out to harness resources for an exploitative kind of European planning.

The war had brought much destruction and a newly conceived regional policy, also described as industrialization policy, became common (Vanhove/Klaassen 1980; Drevet 2008). The European Coal and Steel Community in fact pursued an industrialization policy. Issues of urban growth management were expected to arise in the hotspots of coal and steel production, so planners wanted to be on board.

The Dutch were a major force in this. Industrialization policy in The Netherlands was not under their control, but managing urban growth in this densely populated corner of Europe was their province. So they wanted to coordinate industrial development, alongside with other sector policies, by means of an overall national spatial plan. Regarding a statutory plan as the vehicle of achieving coherence, Dutch planners at the time thus thought like Schuster. They also positioned their urban agglomerations in their European context. With an eye on the Atlantic Seaboard of the US, they painted the scenario of a future megacity stretching from the Western Netherlands to the Ruhr Area and the Belgian urban agglomeration. Like in The Netherlands where the rapid development of the west of the country was a challenge for planners, they and their international colleagues stipulated a technical planning imperative. There was an added incentive: European institutions embracing planning would improve their standing nationally. It is safe to assume that what planners had in mind was for Europe formulating some form of, albeit broad plan for which a supra-national competence was required, but then the planners concerned, in particular those from The Netherlands, were early European enthusiasts.

The small group of European planners – with South Europeans largely absent from these debates, but then the Italians were the only ones who were members of the European Economic Community – discovered quickly that they were pursuing different planning ideas. As indicated, the Dutch and also the German planners saw a land-use plan, albeit on a large scale and thus fairly general in nature, as the vehicle for squaring the imperatives of economic development with the preservation of open space and of enhancing amenity. France as against this pursued *aménagement du territoire*, the generative metaphor being that of "Paris and the French desert" (*Paris et le désert français*; Gravier 1947; see also Vanhove/Klaassen 1980; Baudelle 2008). However, the French planning vehicle of choice was not a statutory plan. Rather, the Jacobin state gave direct funding for projects designed to smooth out spatial imbalances. In European spatial planning the French view – suitably modified to suit the context of France as the decentralized state that the country has become since – rather than the Dutch and German view prevails. Regarding it quite rightly as much the same as *aménagement du territoire*, France is sympathetic, therefore, to EU territorial cohesion policy. The point is, with its French roots, under this flag European spatial planning is not, and will not become, regulatory land-use planning.

At the beginning, there was no immediate need for the emergent European planning community to resolve any such differences between planning traditions. The community had to be held together. The European Economic Community was in the process of being set up, and the Spaak Report, called after the Belgian foreign minister Paul-Henri Spaak, which laid the foundations of the Treaty of Rome, recommended setting up an investment fund to promote balanced development – the French view. Before then, the Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community had already foreseen in

such positive measures, co-financed by national governments, in regions where its policies would lead to the down-scaling of industry. As Husson (2002: 25) recounts, the High Authority had dealt with industrial conversion in the Hainaut Region of Belgium decades before the European Community invoked such policies.

The Spaak Report highlighted the need also for coordination between existing and future regional plans and those plans due to be developed by Common Market institutions (Pierret 1984: 32). In other words, from the word go two of the rationales for European spatial planning/territorial cohesion policy, balanced development and good territorial governance – cohesion and coherence – were on the wish list. This was based on the recognition that the removal of customs barriers would change the economic geography of Europe, but this was certainly not a call for a European land-use plan.

In 1957 the signatories of the Treaty of Rome went no further, though, than declaring in the preamble that they were "[a]nxious to strengthen the unity of their economies and to ensure their harmonious development by reducing the differences existing between the various regions and the backwardness of the less favoured regions", and in Article 2 giving the European Economic Community the task of "reducing the differences existing in various regions and by mitigating the backwardness of the less favoured" (EEC Treaty 1957). Under discretionary powers given to it, the Commission granted temporary relief in some cases – mainly in the Italian Mezzogiorno – from implementing measures to complete the, as it was then called, Common Market (Pierret 1984: 32-34), but no positive measures were taken. As indicated, Italy was the odd one out, and Italian calls for an active regional policy were ignored (Drevet 2008).

Spatial planners were largely absent in the debates leading to the Treaty of Rome. The only ones known to have expressed an interest were the Dutch. They dreamed of the European Economic Community getting involved in the kind of spatial planning that they were propagating for The Netherlands. This was the result of personal initiative: One of the Dutch negotiators and co-signatory of the Treaty of Rome, Johannes Linthorst Homan, a member of the European Movement, had previously been chairman of the Dutch national planning commission. He was to be disappointed by the lack of attention to spatial planning.

4 In the doldrums

The doldrums refers to the area of stagnation caused by the 'empty chairs crisis', to be discussed below. European planning, too, was in a period of gestation in which in one form or another, Dutch national planners and a select group of their peers in neighbouring countries continued to explore options. They participated vigorously in a conference of the regions of North-West Europe which they had helped setting up. Sponsored by national and regional planning establishments, this conference met regularly until the mid-1990s by which time most founding fathers had left the scene. In the 1960s, it did pioneering work, collecting data, mapping the European territory and formulating veritable transnational spatial planning proposals, with the *Collège de l'Europe* at Bruges sponsored by the European Movement providing support. Some of this found its way into Dutch national planning documents which, invoking data etc. provided by the permanent conference continued to position the country in its wider context. The prospect of the Channel Tunnel and the changes which this mega project would bring to the geography of this corner of Europe aroused much interest, too.

There were murmurings of the need of a European planning agency, but of course to no avail. The Benelux Economic Union was more receptive to the idea of planning reaching beyond national boundaries, but it was to take until 1986 before it published its

first Structural Outline Sketch – the first ever official transnational document. Cross-border cooperation was another concern of the Benelux. In 1967, Germany and The Netherlands also set up a joint planning commission which still continues to operate. There are other well-known examples of cross-border planning, like the Regio Basiliensis, a private initiative, and the prototypical Euregio straddling the Dutch and German border antedating cross-border and transnational planning under the Community initiative INTERREG.

Meanwhile, the Parliamentary Assembly – forerunner of the European Parliament – heard pleas for the European Economic Community to engage in regional policy in 1961. It adopted a resolution, authored by a Dutch representative, the aim being to help less developed regions and also to arrive at a reasonable division of labour between the territories of the Community and to counteract the manifest tendency towards over-concentration in more or less all member states. One can read into this the rationales for, and preferred mode of European spatial planning: cohesion, coherence and cooperation.

The 1961 resolution also invited the Commission to organise a conference. Its First Vice-President, Robert Marjolin (a former close collaborator of Jean Monnet) chaired this 'Conference on the Regional Economies', with Commission President Walter Hallstein giving an opening speech spelling out the rationale of a common regional policy in terms that sound remarkably modern. As Husson (2002) reports (see also Drevet 2008: 47), there was even talk of asking the Commission to study the proposition of an *aménagement du territoire européen* – European spatial planning.

The rapporteur, Georges Pierret (1984: 36) from the Bretagne, recounts Marjolin as the second speaker having put his finger on the key issue: The highly developed core benefitting more from the Common Market than peripheral regions, a key concern right up to the present. Pierret describes the follow-up, the Commission making proposals (see also Vanhove/Klaassen 1980; Drevet 2008: 47) to the Council of Ministers in 1965. However, shortly before President Charles De Gaulle had instigated the 'policy of the empty chair' causing the European Economic Community to enter the doldrums. His aim was to curtail a Commission that in his eyes was arrogating to it rights of the member states. The Marjolin initiative for the European Economic Community to become active in the area of regional policy could not have come at a worse moment! In fact it seems to have contributed to neither Hallstein nor Marjolin receiving a second term (Pierret 1984: 39). The 'empty chairs crisis' itself ended with the 'Luxembourg Compromise' giving member states a veto in all cases where a Council decision is purported to pose as threat to vital national interests. European integration became less dynamic than its advocates had hoped for.

During this period, the Commission – always good for taking initiatives that would increase its sway over the member states – continued to study regional policy issues, forming even a directorate-general for this purpose. It formulated what amounts to a rationale of continuing validity for European spatial planning/territorial cohesion policy. It is that European integration implies a recomposition of European territory and thus its rethinking on an appropriate geographical level. Thus, any regional policy should be conceived, not only from national, but also a European perspective. Thus, like in France, European regional policy must improve the allocation of public funds to combat excessive concentration (Drevet 2008: 46).

Funding for European regional policy became available only in the mid-1970s. De Gaulle had left the scene, opening the way for the United Kingdom, together with Denmark and Ireland, to join in 1972. The UK could not profit from the Common Agricultural Policy in proportion to its contribution. It could do with assistance, though, for

declining industrial areas. So to compensate the UK, a regional policy of sorts was introduced. Drevet (2008) mocks it for being neither regional nor communautarian but a mere financial transfer to national governments to support whatever regional policy they wished to pursue. This restricted role of regional policy only changed when Jacques Delors introduced a programmatic approach, experimented with in the prior Integrated Mediterranean Programmes (IMPs), and modelled on the evolving French regional policy. The IMPs were particularly influential. They involved local stakeholders, an innovative practice diametrically opposed to previous regional initiatives of the central state. The approach has become a hallmark of EU cohesion policy since. Being located in the Mediterranean space of the now enlarged European Community, the IMPs inevitably meant more influence than before for South European thinking. But this was not in the area of spatial planning as such. Rather, the influence concerned governance issues.

Meanwhile, the Council of Europe, set up in 1949, with the European Convention of Human Rights its most important achievement, offered an alternative avenue for European planners to argue their case. Indeed, thinking about European planning shifted to this arena. Not only regional economic, but also spatial planners participated. Overconcentration of population and regional disparities posed economic as well as middle-down-the-road planning problems. The Council of Europe passed a resolution in 1961 pointing at the spatial dimension of human rights. "Harmonious geographical development" – cohesion – was thus considered a task for European institutions (Déjeant-Pons 2003). In 1964, the Council of Europe set up a working party which published 'Regional Planning a European Problem' (CoE 1968). Importantly, regional planning as conceived by the working party was not restricted to planning by any regional level of government. Region was a generic term referring to any kind of area. So regional planning stood for spatial planning.

Set up jointly with the European Conference of Local Authorities, the working party provided a fully-fledged analysis of, and a programme for, regional (spatial) planning in Europe, also at the level of the European Economic Community. The participation of local authorities was important. In the context of the European Economic Community, subnational authorities were not sitting at the negotiating table. The majority of the member states were still centralised and saw no need to involve them. From the perspective of the Bretagne, Pierret (1984; 1997) gives a vivid picture of the struggles between regional lobbies and the French central bureaucracy. The Council of Europe provided an outlet for articulating the concerns of subnational authorities[3].

The report of the working party recounted the failed attempt of the Commission, in pursuance of the initiative above by the Parliamentary Assembly, to get approval from the Council of Ministers for any form of such a policy. It also reported the establishment of a Regional Policy Directorate, initially merely to study regional issues, in the Commission. The main recommendation of the report was directed at the Council of Europe itself. It pointed out the danger of the bifurcation of the European continent. It was after all the unique selling point of the Council of Europe that it assembled all countries or in any case those west of the Iron Curtain:

"Everybody is aware how serious it would be if co-operation in the field of regional planning, like co-operation in other fields, were to split Europe in two or be left to 'Smaller Europe'. How could one leave out 'strategically' countries such as Switzerland,

[3] The Committee of the Regions would only be set up after the Treaty of Maastricht came into operation in 1993.

which 'guards' the Alpine passes, Austria, which is the crossroads of relations with Eastern European countries, Denmark, which links us with the Scandinavian countries, or indeed the United Kingdom at a time when the Channel tunnel is no longer a utopian dream.

It would seem therefore that, in the present state of European co-operation, the Council of Europe might provide the framework – geographically the most appropriate – for a European Conference of Ministers responsible for regional planning." (CoE 1968: 88).

So the working party proposed, and the Council of Europe agreed to, setting up this conference. The resolution referred to regional planning as an important field of intergovernmental co-operation, one of the "main axes of development of the European society of tomorrow", and one of the Council's four most important fields of action. (CoE 1968: 90)

The working party made no recommendations as to the shape and operation of the proposed conference. Importantly, because the Council of Europe had no supra-national powers, regional planning was defined as an 'intergovernmental' task, one that the governments concerned should tackle jointly. This notion was to become important later when on German instigation the ESDP, too, was defined in such terms.

Germany hosted the first meeting of this permanent conference in 1970. It became known by its French acronym as CEMAT (*Conférence Européenne des Ministres responsable de l'aménagement du territoire*). CEMAT produced numerous publications and a 'European Regional/Spatial Planning Charter', also known as the Torremolinos Charter (CoE 1984) and a series of publications before and after. This was a high point in European spatial planning during the period characterised here as the doldrums because of the lack of any real action. Prepared by a 'Committee of senior officials', the Charter identified common planning principles: balanced social-economic development, quality of life, responsible management of nature and the environment and a rational use of land. Beyond this, the Charter underlined the right of citizens to participate and underscored the importance of horizontal and vertical coordination. One sees once again the themes of cohesion, coherence and cooperation reflected in the Charter. On this basis, the ministers decided to propose a European regional planning strategy.

However, two CEMAT meetings further down the line, in 1988 at Lausanne, a draft written by an enthusiastic expert from Luxembourg did not even get a hearing. Due to cost-savings, the Council of Europe had curtailed the activities of CEMAT. In the margins of Lausanne, the Dutch and the French minister attending decided to shift the discussion to the arena of the European Community, then undergoing its revival under Jacques Delors. As a follow-up to the EDSP in which this initiative eventually issued, CEMAT would adopt the 'Guiding Principles for the Sustainable Development of the European Continent' (CoE 2002) generalizing ESDP principles to apply to the whole of Europe rather than the EU15.

In parallel to CEMAT, the European Parliament, as the Parliamentary Assembly was called since its members had been directly elected, continued its lobby for planning. A major initiative came from a member from the Walloon Region of Belgium, Paul-Henry Gendebien. His report invited the European Commission "to implement an overall European regional planning policy which will give expression to the political determination to effectively administer and to preserve the territory of Europe as a common domain" (Gendebien 1983: 6). Once again, it is clear from the context that what is meant is a form of European spatial planning.

This policy should go beyond doling out support to disadvantaged regions. Three objectives were stipulated: coordination of existing Community measures, promoting balanced and integrated regional development, pursuing a proactive policy to guarantee the lasting survival of the European heritage. As will become evident, this is remarkably like the ESDP guidelines. It is also like what the Torremolinos Charter has said and represents the best thinking at the time, with continuing validity in the 21st century.

Gendebien also set out the procedures to be followed and proposed the formation of a unit under the responsibility of one of the Commissioners. His report gave a comprehensive analysis of the rationale and the historical and legal context, on the way debunking the argument that the European Community did not possess a competence in the matter by pointing out that

- regional and environmental policy were not explicitly mentioned in the Treaty of Rome either but had been set up under its Article 232, and
- the Community already pursued a many-faceted *de-facto* regional planning policy which only needed to be rendered more transparent and effective.

When the European Commission did not respond – the European Parliament had less clout than today – the European Parliament passed two further resolutions. In a presentation to the Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning of the European Parliament in 1986, the chairman of CEMAT, a position held at the time by the Dutch planning minister, advocated for both the European Community as well as the Council of Europe, each in its own area of responsibility, to engage in spatial planning.

As far as the European Community was concerned, this was still to no avail. This was why, as mentioned, at the CEMAT meeting at Lausanne, the Dutch minister (not the same one who had spoken at the European Parliament but his successor) and his French counterpart decided to take yet another initiative, one that was to change the course of events. By that time, the Single European Act had become a fact.

The doldrums era has seen the articulation of the rationale for European spatial planning as a response to issues that were inherent to the very project of European integration. The Commission, with the European Parliament and the Council of Europe in the wings, took many initiatives which the member states either ignored or – as with the European Regional Development Fund – tried to stifle respectively to bring back into the national fold, like when moneys from the Community coffers were in fact used to subsidise state budgets rather than to pursue agreed common objectives. The ambiguities of the European construct – member states agreeing to give the Community institutions a role, only to judiciously curtail the pursuit of common objectives afterwards – became only too apparent.

5 The boom era

At the end of the doldrums era, one can thus fairly say that a veritable European spatial planning programme in *statum nascendi* existed. Coinciding with the two terms, from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, of Jacques Delors as President of the European Commission, the subsequent boom era inexorably raised the question of the role of this programme in relation to Community policies, in particular to cohesion policy under the Single European Act. Cohesion policy as such became serious business. After all, the 'cohesion countries' Spain, Portugal, Greece and Ireland had made acceptance of the Single Market and the European Monetary Union contingent upon a doubling of the Structural Funds and the addition of a Cohesion Fund. They had re-iterated what had

already been a rationale for proposing European regional policy, the fact that countries in the core stood to benefit disproportionately from integration, and that the others needed assistance in order to be able to compete.

Spatial planning became an, albeit controversial part of this cohesion policy. This came about as a result of the French-Dutch initiative on which the two ministers had come to an agreement at Lausanne in 1988. Although coming from different planning traditions, the two initiators shared a common purpose: to give an explicit spatial dimension to Community policies, but not by way of statutory land-use planning. To the French, statutory planning had never occurred, and since 1965, at national level in any case, the Dutch, too, had abrogated the idea of a statutory plan, replacing it with indicative spatial policies instead which in albeit modified form could conceivably be formulated at Community level, too. Subsequent events would show that other countries, like Germany, were less relaxed about this possibility, an attitude that finally carried the day and led to member state reluctance to allow the Community, led by the Commission, to proceed in this direction. Germany claimed, and eventually all countries including The Netherlands agreed, that there existed no community competence in the matter.

This related to unresolved business. It was no accident that the Torremolinos Charter had been called the 'European Regional/Spatial Planning Charter'. It combined the concern for balanced development with one for the rational use of land. The latter suggested that, as is the case in many countries, a land-use plan should be the vehicle for planning. As the reader knows, this was not, however, the idea behind French *aménagement du territoire*, which happened to be what the initiators of the next round of discussions had in mind when they raised the issue of European spatial planning. One cannot imagine for the participants on both sides to have been ill-informed about each other's way of thinking about planning, but unfortunately neither side could break the mould of its own tradition and established views.

Led by the Germans, the majority of the member states thus saw planning as a part of the sovereign control of nation-states over their territory. The French initiators, including French Commission officials, supported by the Dutch had been after something else: an agreed strategic spatial framework for improving the governance of the Structural Funds. That framework might influence the management of funding programmes, but it would never take the form of a land-use plan of any description. Land-use planning could safely be left to the member states and their subnational authorities.

The first French initiative in this episode related to the regulations pertaining to the European Regional Development Fund. It allowed the Commission to formulate the first spatial planning document of sorts pertaining to the EU12, as it then still was, called 'Europe 2000' (CEC 1991) followed by 'Europe 2000+' (CEC 1994). Meanwhile, the ministers of spatial planning and/or regional policy (designations and the allocation of powers differed, and continue to differ, as between member states) started their series of informal meetings with one at Nantes in 1989 (Faludi/Waterhout 2002). No formation of the Council of Ministers dealt with the Structural Funds, and so some may have seen this informal meeting as a forerunner of a regional planning council. Indeed, in 1993 and 1994, the informal ministerial meetings would style themselves as informal ministerial 'councils'. However, it never came to them becoming council formations proper. To this present day, the status of ministerial meetings remains an issue last discussed at Marseille in November 2008.

Returning to the first meeting at Nantes, the French planning agency DATAR had wanted to invoke spatial scenarios as a framework for improving European regional policy (Faludi/Peryony 2001). *Aménagement du territoire* places regional development

interventions in such a framework, so this was once again an extrapolation of French planning thought to the level of the Community, but it was difficult to convey the purpose behind this to the other participants. Anyhow, the Italians organized a follow-up focusing on regional development in the periphery in 1990, and so did the Dutch with urban networks in the whole of Europe as their theme in 1991. By that time the Germans had started their campaign for European spatial planning to be treated as a joint member state responsibility, the inter-governmental rationale as formulated previously by the Council of Europe. Thus, German planners wanted European spatial planning to evolve through voluntary co-operation, as with their own so-called 'Guidelines for Regional Planning' which were the joint product of the federal minister and the ministers of the German *Länder* responsible for planning (Bundesministerium für Raumordnung, Bauwesen und Städtebau 1993).

This became the competence issue. Had European planning been framed successfully as the formulation of a spatial strategy, or spatial scenarios, to underpin the delivery of the Structural Funds, this issue may not have arisen[4]. However, once again, in particular the Germans framed the issue in terms of control of land use, a sovereign right of nation-states. What is relevant here is that the German planners involved where nowhere dealing with the administration of the Structural Funds. The latter were the province of the economic ministry, together with the relevant ministries of the German *Länder*, and these economic policy makers kept the planners at arm's length. So land-use planning was all that the German planners involved had to go by. Understandably, they had no love, nor much feeling, for the Community's cohesion policy that spoke, not to them, but their national-level adversaries. Land-use planning, they insisted, was a matter for the member states and their subnational authorities, depending on national arrangements.

Still, the fact that this became an issue remains a puzzle. Surely, it must have been clear to the planners of the member states involved that this sovereign right was not put into question by French-style initiatives of the Commission. Conceived as a matter of legal rights to self-determination, sovereignty remains a well-established principle, unimpaired by the EU:

"The main unresolved issue pertains to the implications (...) for autonomy in the sense of action possibilities – 'actual' independence or 'real' sovereignty (...): [A]ll that is obvious is that the implications are contradictory and that internationalization [of which European integration is a part – AF] tends to deprive nation-states of some action possibilities while supplying them with others" (Goldmann 2001: 181).

Clearly, EU cohesion policy nowhere affects sovereignty in the sense above, but it does circumscribe what member states can do, directly by way of the conditionality of obtaining Structural Funds, as well as through the link with EU competition policy, and indirectly by changing the context in which actors operate. So, rather than any fear that the sovereign rights of member states might be impaired, the real purpose of the German insistence on there being no EU competence for spatial planning – which the other member states, some more enthusiastically than others, eventually subscribed to – may have been to deprive the Commission of a means to exercise its powers more effectively.

From the moment the competence issue entered the scene, tension was ripe. Whilst relying on technical assistance and administrative support from the Commission, the

[4] In fact, in 1995 the then French Presidency put such scenarios on the agenda.

member states were guarding against any real or imagined Commission take-over of the ESDP. Having sustained the process until its final conclusion at Potsdam in 1999 (CEC 1999), the Commission called its support a day. This is when it re-framed the issue of a spatial framework for cohesion policy in terms of the pursuit of territorial cohesion. In Commission eyes the very concept of spatial planning had been tainted. Territorial cohesion avoids the connotations, never intended by the Commission officials concerned, of land-use regulation being intended. Rather, territorial cohesion policy seems a natural compliment to the well-established policy of the EU to foster economic and social cohesion, but this is for later to discuss.

Much has thus been made of the fact that the EU did not have a competence in matters of spatial planning[5]. Whether this is true is open to doubt. Gendebien has already been quoted for pointing out that, making use of the catch-all Article 232 of the Treaty of Rome, EU regional and also environmental policy have operated long before being enshrined in the Single European Act. It would clearly have been possible to take the same avenue for spatial planning. However, there was no political will to do this. There was consensus, however, on the need for what was called a 'spatial planning approach' as formulated in the ESDP: the pursuit of more coherence between sector policies as they were affecting space at various scales. Earlier on it was stated that, seen in this way, spatial planning in fact coincided with the core issue in territorial cohesion policy, the coherence of sector policies as regards their territorial impacts.

The ESDP forcefully advocated the spatial planning approach. It also articulated a set of basic principles, similar to what the Gendebien Report had proposed: the pursuit of polycentric development in Europe, and also urban-rural partnership, parity of access to infrastructure and knowledge throughout Europe, prudent management of the natural and cultural heritage. On this basis, the ESDP formulated sixty policy options as a kind of menu for stimulating the 'Europeanization' of national, regional and local planning.

To the minds of the Commission officials concerned, spatial planning was implied in the Community competence to pursue economic and social cohesion, but as reported at the beginning of this paper, after having made this argument forcefully, but unsuccessfully, at the informal meeting of ministers held in Madrid in 1995, the Commission resigned itself to its role of hosting meetings and facilitating the completion of the ESDP, a process that took another four years.

Even though informal, the ESDP did have an, albeit diffuse influence (Waterhout 2008). Among others, a transnational strand was added to the Community initiative INTERREG which became the planners' main playground. Territorial cooperation at various cross-border and transnational scales became routine, so much so that tens of thousands of experts of various denominations are now involved in some form of 'European' project.

6 Crisis

As indicated, merely assisting with the intergovernmental ESDP had not been enough for an ambitious Commission. The concept of territorial, alongside with economic and social cohesion in the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe was designed to justify Community – and thus Commission – involvement. This was once again a French initiative designed in the first instance to counteract the liberalisation of public services considered essential to sustain the standard of living in thinly populated and de-

[5] For a comprehensive statement of German legal thinking in the matter at the time see Gatawis (2000); for a recent position decidedly more sympathetic to EU territorial policy see Battis/Kersten (2008).

populating French regions (Faludi 2006). The French Commissioner for regional policy at the time, Michel Barnier, turned this into the more comprehensive concept that it is now, and it became a stand-in for any European spatial planning for which the European Community was said to be lacking a competence. Importantly, reacting to the adoption of the Lisbon Strategy of making Europe the most competitive region globally, Barnier also factored competitiveness into the equation. In fact, the ESDP had already put polycentric development forward as a way of enhancing the competitiveness of Europe, so this was no break with previous thinking.

This emphasis on competitiveness came in handy when the Sapir Report (Sapir et al. 2004) criticised cohesion policy. Barnier must also have been instrumental in including territorial cohesion in the Constitution which was eventually signed in Rome in October 2004. Its rejection by France and The Netherlands threw not just EU territorial cohesion policy, but the whole European project into disarray.

While the institutional issues continued to simmer, the discussion about cohesion policy became hot, with six net-contributors to the budget led by the UK demanding a fundamental overhaul amounting to the renationalisation of EU regional policy. The package is a clever one. While sustaining the principle of solidarity by expressing willingness to continue funding economic development, mainly but not exclusively in the new member states, it suggested funding for governments and their programmes rather than for a Commission-led policy. At the same time the package aimed at ending the practice of EU funding for regional policies in the richer member states, called the pumping around of money: net-contributors having to reclaim part of their contribution under Commission tutelage (Bachtler/Mendez 2007). The combined effect of giving money to governments and ending the practice of EU regional policy applying throughout its entire territory would have the effect of eliminating the Commission as a player in regional policy, hence the term renationalisation.

This was a major issue in the negotiations on the Financial Framework 2007-2013 ending in a late-night compromise in December 2005. The compromise left this and other issues unresolved, but with a commitment to review them in time for the next Financial Framework. By that time, the Commission had already reoriented cohesion policy towards the achievement of the aims of the Lisbon Strategy of improving Europe's competitiveness.

Presently, the debate on cohesion policy post-2013 is already under way, shaping the context in which territorial cohesion is being discussed. The other element of this context is the new Treaty of Lisbon aiming to resolve the institutional issues left hanging in the air by the dramatic rejection of the Constitution. With its ratification, the competence issue as such has been settled, but at the same time cohesion policy is undergoing its review above, with the Commission pursuing territorial cohesion as one way of countering the imminent threat of its renationalisation. Making the pursuit of competitiveness into one of its key concerns, the Commission is reorienting cohesion policy towards the Schumpeterian goals of the Lisbon Strategy, now in the process of being replaced by 'Europe 2020'.

This is also reflected in the Territorial Agenda of the European Union (2007) (see also Faludi 2009) and in EU territorial cohesion policy as laid out in the Commission's 'Green Paper' (CEC 2008). The more than 350 reactions to the Green Paper are generally supportive, stressing the need to involve regional and local authorities and stakeholders, but also for an EU-wide strategy. Importantly, some reactions recall the achievements of the ESDP and wish the Commission to readmit spatial planning into the territorial cohesion discourse, while others draw a clear line between the two, so the

competence issue continues to simmer under the surface, the Lisbon Treaty's listing of territorial cohesion as one of the competences shared between the Union and the member states notwithstanding.

7 Conclusions

Elaborating upon its programmatic approach, territorial cohesion policy could become a mainstay of cohesion policy after 2013. In this context it is worth recalling that the remit of cohesion policy extends beyond the administration of the European Regional Development Fund. Not only are there other Structural Funds, the policy to pursue sustainable development and research and development are also implicated. This could be extended to make cohesion policy into a vehicle for coordinating all EU policies with territorial impact. Having said this, one needs to admit that this is a tall order, requiring daring initiatives, especially in view of the notorious difficulties of coordination at Brussels.

However, the adaptability and inventiveness of the Commission should not be underestimated. Requested by the European Council to formulate a European Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region in 2007, it pulled its act together, with many directorates-general providing an input under the leadership of the Territorial Cooperation Unit of DG Regio. Already, there is talk of more of these regional strategies for the Danube River Basin, the Alpine Region and possibly also for the Mediterranean. So who knows, conceived as the formulation of macro-regional strategies, spatial planning could become a vehicle, not only for territorial cohesion, but for EU policy generally. And, if so, interest in spatial planning is bound to increase.

The new macro-regional strategies which appear to be harbingers of the future are certain to represent examples also of territorial governance spanning the divide between communautarian and member state competences. This is another pointer to the future. Responding to such new developments, planners need a dynamic understanding of EU governance, the role of space/territory in an integrating Europe, and of spatial planning/territorial cohesion policy in the context of the shifting target which is the European project. These are not problems that are unique to planning. In fact, experts of all kinds find it difficult to come to an agreement on how to approach them. However, there is a consensus emerging that one needs to surpass thinking in terms derived from the nation-state, more in particular from anachronistic ideas about how it should function, rather than how it does function under conditions of globalisation.

The unhelpful debate about whether the EU does, or should have, a spatial planning competence has been but a reflection of the idea that control over territory is a defining characteristic of the nation-state, and that relinquishing it would undermine its sovereignty. This is patently untrue. Sovereign rights are not at stake, but Goldmann has been quoted as making the distinction between formal rights and effective control. Control over territory, including land use, is subject to many influences. So in exercising their right to regulate land use, nation states and sub-national authorities are never autonomous.

A return to an idealized situation (if ever it existed) when nation states had control over their territory is patently impossible. In fact, what the very concept of governance stands for is the diffusion of control, and the need to cooperate across levels and sectors, with state authorities and EU institutions representing nodal points in a complex network. As Allmendinger and Haughton (2009) have shown, this diffusion is a defining characteristic, not just of European planning, but of spatial planning in the 21st century generally. The European project clearly adds to this diffusion, but it is neither the root cause of, nor the key factor in shaping the situation.

As the same authors argue, the role of space/territory in this context is also in need of re-conceptualisation. In fact, this is implied in the above. Although legally defined jurisdictions continue to be the object of statutory land-use planning, they are no longer (as the Schuster Report still assumed as being self-evident) the most relevant, let alone the exclusive reference frameworks for spatial planning. Rather, spatial planning relates to what, with a term speaking to the imagination, Allmendinger and Haughton (2009) call 'soft' spaces: configurations relevant to the real and shifting ongoing processes that become the object of formulating spatial visions or strategies. This is like Healey (2007) and Davoudi and Strange (2009) basing themselves on leading-edge geographers talking about relative rather than absolute space. Relative space is an ad-hoc construct arising out of the interaction between various actors. In the discussion concerning the Green Paper, the Polish submission talks about these as functional areas, arguing that they, rather than administrative ones should form the object of territorial cohesion policy.

In fact, if one goes not by the legal definition but by the real reach of its influence and responsibility, the European Union as such, too, is a 'soft' space or functional area: Beyond the territories of the twenty-seven members, there is the European Economic Area where EU law applies; there is Switzerland which is constantly negotiating its participation in the EU space; there are recognised and would-be candidates diligently trying to get ready for accepting EU law and in the process becoming part of EU space, or some aspects thereof; there is a Barcelona Space (so called after the city where it was created) around the Mediterranean; and there are multifarious other arrangements of a diffuse nature extending the reach of the EU north, south, east and west. Lastly, there is the highly differentiated global reach of the EU documented by Didelon, Grasland and Richard (2008). Not even the Eurozone is as clearly established as one might think. Beyond the sixteen member states that are in it, the Euro is legal tender in Kosovo and in Montenegro, and (like the dollar) it is increasingly accepted in other countries as well. Borders in the 21st Century are notoriously fuzzy!

It seems important for planners to re-think what the planning of these 'soft' spaces involves. They need to rid themselves of their fixation on statutory plans relating, as they do, to strictly delimited sections of the surface of the globe. Of course, authorities do exercise jurisdiction over clearly delimited parcels of land, and this statutory planning will continue to play a role, but it is no longer of the essence of spatial planning. In fact, it increasingly becomes the province of litigating lawyers.

Beyond statutory planning, 'soft' spatial planning, also called 'fuzzy' (De Roo/Porter 2007), is the order of the day. In practicing soft planning, traditional planning tools, like spatial analysis and 'spatial positioning' (Williams 1996), requiring the formulation of spatial strategies or visions, continue to be of relevance. The difference is that these are no longer exclusively visions for existing, 'hard' territories. Rather, there can and should be many spatial visions for many 'soft' spaces.

As indicated, the soft spaces that need conceptualising include the space of the EU, difficult though it has been shown to define where exactly the borders of the EU are. Trying to conceptualise the EU territory as a whole, whilst knowing at the same time that, in terms of Graham and Marvin (2001), our world is splintering, maintains the idea of unity without which the European project would be lost.

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